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Third session
New York, 24 May–4 June 2004

Letter dated 3 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the recommendations adopted on the basis of the conclusions reached at the international seminar on "Social integration of youth with disabilities in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States" (St. Petersburg, 21-24 December 2003).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the recommendations circulated as a document of the third session of the Ad Hoc Committee.

(*Signed*) Sergey **Lavrov**

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Annex to the letter dated 3 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

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United Nations — Commonwealth of Independent States

Recommendations of the seminar on "Social integration of youth with disabilities in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States"*

(Saint Petersburg, 22-24 December 2003)

Based on the discussion of the information presented concerning the situation of disabled youth in the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the seminar participants note:

- The similarity of problems in the CIS countries
- The existence of interesting national approaches to the integration of disabled youth at the country level
- The advisability of developing information-sharing in this field in the CIS region
- The need to strengthen cooperation and partnership between Government bodies and public associations in implementing programmes of work with young persons in the CIS member States
- The need to change the paternalistic tendencies in goal- and task-setting when implementing programmes for the social integration of youth with disabilities and to focus on the socialization of disabled youth

I. Environmental accessibility

The overall strategy of State policy on disabled youth must be based on removing barriers to social integration. In this connection, consideration must be given to:

(a) Accessibility of information and communication technologies;

(b) Introduction of modern equipment (means of communication, etc.);

(c) Accessibility of the built and domestic environments and means of transport.

* The seminar was organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in cooperation with Governments and non-governmental organizations of the CIS countries.

II. Information

1. At the national level, there is a need to create a database on disabled youth and key related problems in the near future.

2. It is necessary to prepare periodic national reports or include in existing national reports sections devoted to the problems of disabled youth.

3. Socio-demographic characteristics of disabled persons must be reflected in current statistical reporting. Disabled youth must be singled out as a special social group in specialized bodies' statistics.

4. At the regional level, there is a need to support activities by public associations of the CIS member States aimed at developing information potential and the capacity of means of communicating with young persons and non-governmental organizations, including on the problems of disabled youth.

III. Employment

At the national level, social policy in respect of disabled persons, including youth with disabilities, must pursue the goal of social integration and must be differentiated based on the different groups of disabled persons. This policy must be founded on social partnership between State and non-State structures. The most important method of integrating disabled persons in society is employment in the open labour market. At the same time, the problems of youth with disabilities, including issues relating to their employment, must be incorporated in States' youth policies. To that end:

1. The legislative and legal and regulatory frameworks must encourage the participation of disabled persons, including disabled youth, in general employment while ensuring a non-discriminatory approach.

2. It is advisable to have a single database and a single vacancy bank for different categories of disabled youth.

3. Non-governmental organizations should provide quality information support to State policy on disabled youth, including on issues relating to the choice of profession and to job placement.

4. All labour market actors (the State, employment services, local government bodies, trade unions, employers, youth organizations, disabled persons' organizations, etc.) should participate in developing and implementing employment policy in respect of disabled youth.

5. Specialized enterprises should be maintained but should not constitute the main solution to the problem of employment. In order to increase employers' interest in creating special positions for disabled persons at mainstream enterprises, there is a need to develop a system of incentives.

IV. Vocational training and retraining

In the majority of CIS countries, vocational training for youth with disabilities is organized through specialized educational institutions. In order to create

institutional, social and legal conditions for education, vocational training and retraining, it is necessary to develop national programmes that meet international standards (the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which preclude discrimination against youth with disabilities in the field of education). Programmes must ensure access by youth with disabilities to education in mainstream educational institutions at all educational levels.

1. In the long term, efforts should be made to create an education system that is not only multi-level and integrated, but also continuous.

2. This goal cannot be achieved without retraining educators to work with disabled students. It is advisable to establish resource centres at specialized educational institutions to organize special training for educators aimed at developing the competencies and skills necessary for dealing with disabled persons.

3. In order to retrain educators, resource centres must enlist disabled persons with teaching qualifications or experience.

4. The list of professions for training and retraining of disabled youth must reflect local and regional labour markets.

5. In order to improve job placement for disabled youth, it is advisable to establish in the long term the institution of "counsellor" (social workers or educators) to accompany young persons with disabilities from school until they find employment, provide them with vocational guidance and liaise with them, with their families and with educational institutions and employers.

6. Identifying and meeting the "special educational needs" of disabled youth must be the focus of attention at all levels of education.

7. The budget must be the main source of financing for educational programmes for disabled youth. Taking into account the limited nature of budgetary resources, it is necessary to strengthen efforts to attract extrabudgetary sources of financing, in particular by creating conditions for attracting commercial structures.

V. Social innovations

1. It is necessary to develop and disseminate new principles for efforts to socialize disabled youth based on access to and equal participation in State and public youth programmes.

2. There is a need for State and non-State organizations working in partnership to conduct information campaigns aimed at creating positive perceptions of disabled persons, encouraging disabled youth to be active and making participation in programmes for the social integration of disabled persons more prestigious.

3. The establishment of social centres for disabled youth at the national and local levels should be encouraged in every way possible.

In view of these goals, the seminar participants consider it important:

- For CIS member States to cooperate on the problems of disabled youth, including by exchanging experience and information and developing and implementing joint programmes

- To recommend that the Consultative Council on Labour, Migration and Social Protection of the Population of the CIS member States should consider regularly the progress made in implementing the Agreement on cooperation in solving the problems of disability and disabled persons, of 12 April 1996
- To agree with the initiative of the Regional Forum on Youth (Kyiv, September 2003) concerning the advisability of establishing a council for youth of the CIS member States and with the proposal of Belarus on this issue
- To support the establishment of the association of youth organizations "International Youth Centre"
- To request the CIS Executive Committee to send these recommendations to the Governments of the CIS member States